

Sexual Health

at the Wolverton 020 8974 9331

Kingston upon Thames, Surrey (South West London)

Kingston Hospital 
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Urethritis

Urethritis (NSU) in heterosexual men

What is urethritis (NSU)?

- Urethritis is an inflammatory condition in the urethra (urine passage) of men.
- It is commonly caused by a sexually transmitted infection – either [chlamydia](#) or gonorrhoea.
- In men with urethritis where chlamydia and gonorrhoea have been excluded as a cause the condition is called Non Specific Urethritis (NSU).
- NSU usually causes a discharge from the tip of the penis, pain on passing urine or irritation in the urethra.
- It may be caused by multiple factors including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as Mycoplasma genitalium, other non sexually transmitted infections and irritants.
- NSU can be caught through sex - but not always.
- It is treated with antibiotics.
- If you have NSU we recommend that you should have a full STI screen including an HIV test.

How common is NSU?

- It is a common condition in sexually active men.
- It occurs more frequently in men with a new sexual partner.

How do you catch NSU?

- NSU is usually caught through unprotected sex:
 - Vaginal sex
 - Oral sex
 - Anal sex
- Other infections that are not sexually transmitted may very occasionally lead to NSU:
 - Urinary infection, adenovirus – often with conjunctivitis
- Substances that irritate the delicate lining of the urethra can lead to NSU:
 - Shower gels, tea tree oil, antiseptics or disinfectants
- Trauma to the urethra can lead to NSU:
 - Vigorous and frequent sex, masturbation, inspecting and squeezing the tip of the penis
- NSU cannot be caught by kissing, from swimming pools, saunas or [toilet seats](#).

What would I notice if I had NSU?

- Most men would usually notice one or more of the following symptoms:
 - A milky or clear discharge from the tip of the penis
 - Pain on passing urine
 - A feeling of wanting to pass urine frequently
 - Itching or irritation inside the urethra or tip of the penis
- Some men have only very mild symptoms or have no symptoms at all.

How do I get tested for NSU?

- A swab taken from the tip of the penis is spread on a glass slide, stained and examined under the microscope for signs of infection. This test can only be done at a specialised sexual health clinic. The result is available immediately. This test will also detect gonorrhoea in most men.
- You must not have passed urine for at least 2 hours prior to the test.
- Other tests (swab from penis and urine test) are taken to check for chlamydia and gonorrhoea.
- These results will be ready in 3 days. They will be sent to you via a text message or the nurse may call you.

How is NSU treated?

- Treatment with antibiotics is given immediately to cover both NSU and chlamydia.

Either:

- a single dose of azithromycin 1g (4 tablets)

OR

- a week of doxycycline capsules 100mg twice daily
- All treatments from the Wolverton Centre are free and are given to you in the clinic.
- Both treatments are highly effective – but you need to wait 7 days before having sex again to give the azithromycin time to work.
- We don't normally need to do another test to check the NSU has gone, as long as you have taken your treatment correctly and your symptoms have improved.

What about my partner?

- NSU is usually a sexually transmitted infection so it is important that all current sexual partners and others within the last 4 weeks are tested and treated (even if their tests are negative) before resuming sex again.

What problems can untreated NSU lead to?

- NSU doesn't usually cause any problems.
- Very rarely it may lead to:
 - epididymo-orchitis (pain in the testicles)
 - [reactive arthritis](#) (a type of arthritis) which may also be associated with conjunctivitis - this is called Reiter's Syndrome

Will NSU come back again after treatment?

- In 10 to 20% men with NSU their symptoms may persist or recur again after treatment.
- If this happens a second course of antibiotics will be given.
- Very rarely symptoms may persist despite this – they usually settle with time. You may be referred to one of the consultant's specialist clinics to help with this.

For more information

www.bashh.org

Opening times for advice and to book an appointment:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 8.30am - 6.00pm
 Wednesday 8.30am - 8.00pm
 Friday 8.30am - 1.30pm

[For clinic times please select here](#)



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